



## State of New Jersey

Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council

100 North Road - Route 513

Chester, New Jersey 07930-2322

(908) 879-6737

(908) 879-4205 (Fax)

[www.highlands.state.nj.us](http://www.highlands.state.nj.us)

RICHARD J. CODEY  
*Acting Governor*

JOHN R. WEINGART  
*Chairman*

ADAM J. ZELLNER  
*Executive Director*

For Release: December 15, 2005

Contact: Liz Maziarz (908)-879-6737 x125

### Highlands Council Celebrates First Anniversary

Chester, NJ- The New Jersey Highlands Council's meeting today marked its 21<sup>st</sup> meeting to date and the completion of a successful first year for the fledgling agency. The Council's first meeting was held on December 16, 2004. Since then, Council and staff have worked diligently to execute the mandates of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act.

"Regional planning on the scale of what we are doing here in the Highlands is unprecedented in New Jersey and throughout the nation," said Highlands Council Chairman John Weingart. "I think there is a general consensus that over the past year the Council has made significant progress in implementing the innovative vision of the Legislature."

"The Council was fortunate to be able to attract and hire a talented and experienced staff who have helped us create an unusually open and vibrant public planning process," said Mr. Weingart. "The Council's activities have included numerous meetings with local officials, interest groups and concerned citizens throughout the region to discuss the process and vision of the Regional Master Plan."

"We are committed to having an open process, and appreciate the input of all those who have contributed their opinions and expertise. This input is an invaluable part of the important work we are undertaking," said Mr. Weingart.

"The members have demonstrated their expertise and dedication to the Highlands region in all of their actions," said Highlands Council Executive Director Adam Zellner. "From creating a County and Municipal Partnership program and the Technical Advisory Committees to building working relationships with other state agencies, the Highlands Council remains focused on doing all that they can to insure the success of this endeavor."

### **A Year in the Life of the New Jersey Highlands Council**

August 2004	Governor McGreevey signs the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act.
December 2004	Highlands Council holds its first meeting. The 18-month RMP countdown begins.
January 2005	Secretary of Agriculture Charlie Kuperus addresses Council, highlighting the need for cooperative relationships to insure successful agriculture in the region.
February 2005	Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Susan Bass Levin announces Highlands TDR Pilot Programs.
March 2005	Council presents first outline of the RMP process.
April 2005	Council creates eight Standing Committees to facilitate decision making.
May 2005	Council launches Outreach program and hosts first round of Municipal and County Partnership meetings.  DEP issues Interim Rules for the Highlands Preservation Area.
June 2005	Highlands Council completes a series of meetings “on the road” in each of the region’s seven counties.
July 2005	Council forms Technical Advisory Committees  Governor Codey appoints members of Highlands Municipal Property Tax Stabilization Board.  Highlands Council members and staff participate in Highlands Agriculture tour with the New Jersey Farm Bureau.
August 2005	Highlands Council celebrates 1 <sup>st</sup> anniversary of Legislation.  Council begins contracting for RMP development.
September 2005	First outline of RMP is introduced to the public.
October 2005	Highlands Council Municipal Grant Program distributes first round of planning aid to qualifying municipalities.  Council hosts second round of Municipal and County Partnership meetings.
November 2005	Council members and staff conduct local and statewide outreach efforts at the New Jersey League of Municipalities annual conference.
December 2005	Highlands Municipal Property Tax Stabilization Board holds first meeting.  DEP proposes new rules for the Highlands Region.  Council completes major contracting for RMP development.

##